

children who are trapped in underperforming schools while retaining public funds for public education and without vouchers; and provisions I strongly pushed to update technology in rural schools and to double title I funding.

We should ask not whether the bill achieves perfection but whether it is a fair, constructive compromise that can move the country closer to achieving better schools and a brighter future. And without question, the answer is yes. I urge my colleagues to join in supporting this legislation. It is a good bill. A lot of people have worked hard on it. It is a bipartisan consensus of what we need to do to move forward on education, and I think that it will make a difference.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BASS).

Mr. BASS. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) for yielding me a couple of minutes to talk about this wonderful bipartisan bill.

Mr. Chairman, I commend the ranking member, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER), and the chairman, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), for their working together and also the rest of the committee for a very good product, because this bill provides accountability which will improve educational quality. It provides local school administrators and school boards with more flexibility. It consolidates 34 out of 66 programs. It provides accountability with more funding for title I, which is significant. Lastly, it provides relief for children trapped in failing schools.

Now, although H.R. 1 is a good bill, the single greatest change that we could bring to every elementary and secondary school everywhere in the country is to fulfill the Federal Government's obligation to fully fund its share of the cost of education for the disabled. Now, I bring this up because the Senate incorporated an amendment to make IDEA funding mandatory, but this language was left out of the House bill; and I regret the fact that I was unable to offer an amendment of my own to phase in full funding over the next 10 years as a mandatory program.

Now, mandatory phase-in is good for the program if it is done on a percentage basis. It is good because local school boards can plan financially from year to year how much money they are going to have. It is good for education most importantly because we need to meet that unfunded mandate; but lastly and probably even more importantly, it is important for the program to have it funded on a mandatory basis because then the Congress will be forced to address the programmatic side of IDEA and reconcile the program to a budget.

There are two problems with IDEA, the unfunded mandate and the programmatic side. I hope that the House will consider ceding to the Senate's position on IDEA because it is for respon-

sible government, smart tax policy, and good for education. I commend the chairman and the ranking member for a job well done on H.R. 1.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) will control the time on the Democratic side.

There was no objection.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY), a member of the committee.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank certainly the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for the work that he has done, as well as the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER).

Mr. Chairman, I have been hearing that there are some people that are unhappy with this bill, and I am sorry to say that is too bad. This is a good bipartisan bill. Both sides gave up a lot, and they did. There are certain things in this bill that I would like to have seen in it, but anyway working on bipartisan, that means each person has to give a little bit. Let us get down to what this bill really does. It is going to help our schools that need the most help, with accountability and flexibility.

Mr. Chairman, I come from Long Island. I have some very wealthy suburban schools. They are doing very well, but I also have schools that are failing terribly because they do not have the resources to do what they have to do.

This bill, through title I, is going to help them. We will be helping all the children across this Nation, and that is what the Committee on Education and the Workforce is supposed to do. With that, I would like to say we on the committee are on that committee because we care about education. So I am hoping that all the Members will listen to us and say this is a good bill, accept it and let us help the children of America. That is why we are here. That is why we sit on all the different committees. We can disagree and we can disagree, but when a bill like this comes out of our committee with good bipartisan support, each of us giving up a little bit of something that we wanted, this bill will help the American people.

President Bush accepts this bill, and we should work with him to make sure it goes flying through this House.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS).

(Mr. CHAMBLISS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from the Sixth District of Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) for his leadership on this issue. He is certainly one of the most knowledgeable Members of this House when it comes to education.

Mr. Chairman, I want to take the opportunity to commend the President for ensuring that his administration

makes education of our children its number one priority. While this bill is not a perfect bill, I think we owe a great debt of gratitude to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER) and the ranking member, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER), for the great leadership that they have provided here; and I commend them for bringing both sides together and bringing issues that are important to both sides more towards the middle.

While there are a number of provisions in this bill that I think are very critical, the most important provision, in my opinion, is the Reading First Initiative that we have in this bill that is going to provide flexibility to our States and is going to make reading a number one priority.

My wife is a fifth grade teacher. Her number one frustration with her fifth graders is the fact that too many of them are reading on a first or second grade level and some of them even below that. This bill makes sure that every child in America becomes more proficient in reading by the time they leave the third grade.

As one can imagine, it is frustrating to a teacher not to have children that can read, but imagine the frustration of those children who want to learn but simply are handicapped because they do not have the basic skills.

I commend the administration, and I commend the leadership on the Committee on Education and the Workforce for ensuring that we give priority to the issue of reading and making sure that all of our children learn to read and that we put accountability back on the State and local governments to ensure that they are doing the things necessary to make sure that all of our children are reading much more proficiently and at the early grade level.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. TIERNEY), a member of the committee.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for yielding me this time.

Mr. Chairman, this bill has many good features to it, and I am sure that if we manage to maintain or keep out of it some of the problems that we have run into in the past it will probably pass this body. We have managed to keep out vouchers. We have managed to keep out block grants, things that in the past administration caused this bill to stop dead in its tracks.

If the President continues to maintain the position that he will not insist on those things, the bill will move forward. We still have to work on modernizing schools. We still have to work on having smaller class sizes. There is much more to be done, but I do want to call some attention to one feature of this bill that I think merits some consideration, and that is the high degree of testing that is being asked for.

We have to keep in mind that there already is testing being done in the